

Ontario Greens eye net-zero target date of 2045

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Body

Ontario needs to cut its greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 and be net-zero by 2045, says Green Party Leader Mike Schreiner, who plans to propose a private member's bill this week to address climate change.

"We need urgent climate action and that means legislating a bold climate policy," Schreiner said Monday in announcing his bill, which he is expected to introduce Tuesday in the legislature to set "carbon budgets" and hold future governments to account.

"We need to rapidly and drastically reduce climate pollution to avoid climate disaster."

Deputy Green Leader Dianne Saxe, the province's former environmental watchdog who is running for the Greens in a downtown Toronto riding, said "most of the developed world is reducing its climate pollution - but not Ontario."

"We pollute the climate about as much as we did in 2014 and more than in 2017. This is craziness."

In 2019, the province emitted more than 163 megatonnes.

Schreiner's proposal is based on similar moves in the United Kingdom, where legislation sets out pollution limits that governments have to abide by as they move toward a net-zero target. He likened it to the annual budget set out by the finance minister, but it instead would be "carbon budget" by the environment minister with detailed emissions cutbacks.

His private member's bill will state that net emissions can't exceed a total of 926 megatonnes in the six-year period between 2023 and 2029, and sets a 422 megatonne limit in the four-year period from 2030 to 2034. That drops to 223 megatonnes between 2035 and 2039, and 59 megatonnes between 2040 and 2044.

However, few private member's bills become law.

Schreiner's announcement comes as Environment Minister David Piccini gets set to head to the UN Climate Change Conference in Scotland, which starts Sunday.

"Our government takes climate change extremely seriously. From making the gasoline that drivers use every day cleaner to investing a historic \$7.7 billion in green bonds to help finance public transit initiatives, extreme-weather resistant infrastructure, and energy efficiency and conservation projects, we are taking action to address this important issue," said Andrew Kennedy, Piccini's press secretary, in a statement to the Star.

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